

VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education Washington Secretary of State

WASHINGTON STATE CURRICULUM GRADES 8-12 STUDENT HANDOUT, LESSON 4

THEME: I WANT TO REGISTER; NOW WHAT?

The process of registering to vote is an important step in becoming an independent person; it's like the political equivalent of obtaining your driver's license. You can operate as an individual with a new influence on the direction of your government. You can help determine the course our government's "political vehicle" takes. Not only can you cast an equal vote for the candidates of your choice, but you can also vote on issues like taxes that affect you and others, help set policy by voting on initiatives and referenda, and petition your government for change by legally signing both initiatives and referenda. The first step is to have your county Auditor's office register you to vote and send you your voter registration card. Congratulations are in order on considering this step.

Although you may think the process of registering to vote is mysterious, it really isn't and this activity should help make it easy. You can then complete the process if you are old enough, defer until you are able or pass along this information to someone who IS eligible but has not yet registered.

Included throughout this activity are a few questions to help you make sure that key information about the voter registration process came to your attention. You will be teaching yourself. Write your answers on this paper.

ACTIVITY:

Do you have access to the Internet? If "NO", remember that anyone can call or write for information or forms directly to your county Auditor's office (in the blue Government pages of your phone book), in King County you would look under Records, Elections and Licensing Division. Or, you can contact the Secretary of State's office at:

Secretary of State Voter Registration Services
PO BOX 40237
OLYMPIA WA 98504-0237
Telephone:
(800) 448-4881
(800) 422-8683 TDD/TTY

To have a Washington State voter registration form sent to you by regular mail, you will be asked to supply the following information:
Name
Address
City, State and ZIP
Daytime telephone number with area code

QUESTION 1:

What is the State Voter Hotline phone numbers? (800) ____ - _____, and for the hearing or speech impaired (800) ____ - _____

If you do have access to the Internet, then you have many options for assistance:

- A) One method to get voter registration information is to go to www.vote.wa.gov, then click on "Voter Registration."
- B) Another way to get voter registration information is to email your county Auditor's office. You can find a link to the county Auditor offices from the Secretary of State site at www.vote.wa.gov, then click on "Contacts."
- C) You can also email the Office of the Secretary of State Voter Registration Services at elections@secstate.wa.gov to request information.

QUESTION 2:

Besides contacting their county Elections Division, the public can receive election information by calling (800) 448-4881, namely the State _____. _____.

QUESTION 3:

The county Elections Divisions are available to help you with registering to vote, requesting an absentee ballot, and other elections-related services. Contacting them could not be easier since you have the option to use: a) mail, b) fax, c) _____, d) _____, or e) to visit the office _____. For some services, even a member of your immediate family can communicate with the Elections Division for you.

Easier still, to register to vote on line: Go to www.vote.wa.gov, then click on "Voter Registration." You will have the choice of eight languages for the voter registration form. Page one is instructions; page two is the form, ready to be filled out on the screen, printed and then mailed in. (Note: If you do not have Adobe Acrobat Reader to open this form, just click on that icon and it will be supplied free,

instantly.) To help you become familiar with this form and its instructions, use the following questions as a sort of "self tutorial."

QUESTION 4:

You may register to vote when you are at least 17 and one-half years old and the form will be held for you by the county Elections Division. Can you then vote if you turn 18 on or before the day of the election? YES / NO ____

QUESTION 5:

Will you have to list what political party you like, or belong to, in order to register to vote? YES/NO ____

QUESTION 6:

Other than age, what two legal conditions must you meet before you can register to vote?

- A) Citizen of the _____, and
- B) Legal resident of _____.

QUESTION 7:

Box #7 on the registration form gives the definition of a "legal resident" of Washington State for voter registration purposes, namely one who has lived at the address given for at least ____ days.

QUESTION 8:

To safeguard the election process, we want only voters that legally qualify. According to the "WARNING," there is a penalty if you?

- A) Provide false information,
- B) Wrongly declare that you are eligible to vote,
- C) Are not a U.S. citizen,
- D) Have committed a felony and your rights have not been restored,
- E) All of the above.

You've no doubt noticed that certain personal information is requested but the reasons may not be apparent. Notice that box #3 of the registration form asks for the address where you are officially a resident. This is so you will be given the correct ballot for the precinct (neighborhood area) you live in, since in some elections different precincts have unique offices and issues on the ballot. That's the beauty of the voting process; it lets you impact (vote on) even items that affect only your neighborhood.

QUESTIONS 9:

Box #5 on the registration form asks for your birth date. This is so election officials can verify that you have attained the required age of ____ by the day of the election.

QUESTION 10:

The reason your address of residence is requested in box #3 is to allow you to obtain the correct ____ when you vote.

You may have noticed that boxes #3 and #4 seem repetitious. Look closely. Box #4 asks for your mailing address if it's not your official residence. Why not only list your mailing address? Your physical address determines the precinct you live in, which determines which races and measures are listed on your ballot. The mailing address ensures that you receive any voter materials you may need, e.g. you may receive your mail at a post office box, at school, etc.

Many young adults think they should not register to vote if they have upcoming plans of moving from their residential address. If you are one of those young adults, think again! If you move from your home to begin a job in a new location with the intent of returning, or if you are away at school, in the military, or traveling, you will not lose residency. You simply need to contact your county Elections Division and let them know where to send your absentee ballot.

QUESTION 11:

You can let your county Elections Division know that you want to automatically receive your absentee ballots. You will need to fill out the box under "____ Absentee Request" on the Mail-In Registration Form.

QUESTION 12:

The voter registration form you fill out takes time to process at the Office of the Secretary of State and the county Elections Division. To ensure your voter registration record is accurate on election day, you have two options:

- A) If you mail the voter registration form, it must be postmarked at least _____ days before the election in which you wish to vote.
- B) If you miss that deadline, you can bring the form "in person" to your county Elections Division no later than _____ days before the election.

Regardless of when you mail your voter registration form, it will be entered into your county's voter registration database and you will become a registered voter. However, if you miss the cut-off dates above, you may not be able to vote in the next election following your registration date. You will know your registration is complete when you receive your voter registration card in the mail.

QUESTION 13:

What if you move to a new address in this state? *

- A) If you move to a new county in Washington, to remain eligible to vote you must _____.
- B) If you move, but are still in the same county, you must request a _____ which can be easily done by one of three ways, but this also must be done at least _____ days before the election.

* If you move for college or other temporary purpose, but consider Washington your residential state, you can maintain your current voter registration by calling your local Election Division and have your ballot sent to your temporary out-of-area address.

QUESTION 14:

What if you change your name? Simply send in a new voter registration form. You can download another form by going to www.vote.wa.gov, click on "_____".

QUESTION 15:

From what you can see on the instructions, which is accurate, statement A or B? _____

- A) Absentee voting is an option only if you are ill or absent from your district, or
- B) You can use the absentee option simply for convenience.

QUESTION 16:

You cannot request a one-time absentee ballot on election day, but you can request one as early as _____ days prior to the election.

QUESTION 17:

To request an absentee ballot, contact which of these, A or B? _____

- A) The County Auditor's Elections Division, or
- B) The Secretary of State's office?

QUESTION 18:

One-time absentee ballot requests may be made in person or by which of these methods? _____

- A) Phone,
- B) Fax,
- C) Mail,
- D) Electronically,
- E) All four.

QUESTIONS 19:

For your absentee ballot to be counted, you must have it postmarked on or before what day? _____

QUESTION 20:

You can choose to be a "permanent" absentee voter, thus automatically receiving an absentee ballot before each election. To do this, check the "YES" box and sign in the section named "_____" on the mail-in voter registration form. If you choose to vote by absentee ballot, you must have your ballot postmarked on or before the election day.

QUESTION 21:

Go to www.vote.wa.gov, click on "Contacts," and then "County Auditors." Find the address for your county's Election Division. Does your

county have an email address listed? YES/NO _____

It would be good to correct a possible misconception. At one time registering to vote could be your ticket into the pool of potential jurors (jury duty), so sadly some eligible voters gave up a fundamental citizen right just to avoid a citizen duty. The Legislature changed the law several years ago so this is no longer the case and not a viable reason not to register to vote. Now, not only is the jury pool drawn from the voter registration database, but also from driver license and ID card applications from the State Department of Licensing.

QUESTION 22:

In addition to the voter registration database and applications for identification, potential jurors are also chosen from the application for or renewal of a _____.

Now you see that if you are qualified, you can register to vote, and vote by absentee ballot from anywhere in the world. The answers please! How did you do? Your teacher will have the answers if you need them.

Scoring:

20-22 correct: Let Freedom Ring - VOTE!

17-19 correct: Key Into Freedom - VOTE!

14-16 correct: Voting Is Cool!

00-13 correct: Growing Into Voting!